

JUVENILE JURY INSTRUCTIONS

**JUDGE DONALD S. OWENS
MICHIGAN COURT OF APPEALS
CHAIR, FORMER COMMITTEE ON JUVENILE JURY INSTRUCTIONS**

Because there were no standard juvenile jury instructions, the Michigan Probate and Juvenile Court Judges Association many years ago approved using the Michigan Criminal Jury Instructions, with appropriate modifications, in cases of juvenile delinquency and drafted jury instructions for use in child protective proceedings.

DESIGNATED CASE JURY INSTRUCTIONS

In cases of juveniles designated for trial as adults, the Michigan Criminal Jury Instructions, 2nd Edition, should be used.

DELINQUENCY JURY INSTRUCTIONS

In cases of juvenile delinquency, the Michigan Criminal Jury Instructions, Second Edition, should be used, with appropriate modifications. Whether modifications are either desirable or necessary depends in part on the allegations in the petition. If the juvenile is charged with an offense which would be a crime if committed by an adult, the terms "defendant" and "crime" in the Michigan Criminal Jury Instructions may be used to avoid confusion and slips of the tongue by attorneys, or the words "respondent" and "offense" may be substituted. However, where a juvenile is charged with an offense which would not be a crime if committed by an adult, such substitutions are mandatory. As to the form of verdict, the jury should be instructed that they are to find the juvenile guilty or not guilty of the offense charged (or a lesser included offense, if applicable).

CHILD PROTECTION JURY INSTRUCTIONS

The Instructions Prior to Voir Dire, Voir Dire Questions, Instructions After Voir Dire, and Jury Instructions that follow are based on those that were approved by the Michigan Probate and Juvenile Court Judges Association. They were cited by the Supreme Court in *People v Gates*, 434 Mich 146 (1990) at 160. They have been used for approximately 25 years and, to my knowledge, have never been the cause of a single reversal of a jury verdict in a child protection case in Michigan. These instructions have been updated from time to time based on statutory changes, including as recently as May of 2003. I have revised them to make them consistent with the plain English used in the Michigan Criminal Jury Instructions, Second Edition, and Michigan Model Civil Jury Instructions, and with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Committee on Standard Civil Jury Instructions first adopted Standard (now Model) Child Protection Jury Instructions in 1998. **I do not recommend using those instructions because I believe they are inadequate and contain errors.** Those instructions have not been approved by the Supreme Court. Furthermore, MCR 2.516(D)(2) requires their use only if they are applicable, if they accurately state the applicable law, and if they are requested by a party. They generally will not be requested by a party since attorneys throughout the state are used to using the attached Child Protection Jury Instructions. As a result, I **strongly** recommend the use of the attached instructions in child protection cases.

CHILD PROTECTION JURY INSTRUCTIONS

**Judge Donald S. Owens
Michigan Court of Appeals
May 1, 2003**

INSTRUCTIONS PRIOR TO VOIR DIRE

(1) Ladies and gentlemen, I am Judge _____ and it is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you to the _____ County Circuit Court.

(2) I know that jury service may be a new experience for some of you. Jury duty is one of the most serious duties that members of a free society are called upon to perform.

(3) The jury is an important part of this court. The right to a trial by jury is an ancient tradition and is part of our legal heritage.

(4) Jurors must be as free as humanly possible from bias, prejudice or sympathy for any party. All parties in a trial are entitled to jurors who can keep an open mind until the time comes to decide the case.

(5) A trial begins with the selection of a jury. The purpose of this process is to obtain information about you that will help us choose a fair and impartial jury to hear this case.

(6) During jury selection the attorneys and I will ask you questions. This is called the voir dire. The questions are meant to find out if you know anything about the case. Also, we need to find out if you have any opinions or personal experiences that might influence you for or against any of the parties or witnesses.

(7) The questions may probe deeply into your attitudes, beliefs and experiences. They are not meant to be an unreasonable prying into your private lives. The law requires that we get this information so that an impartial jury can be chosen.

(8) If you do not hear or understand a question, you should say so. If you do understand it, you should answer it truthfully and completely. (Judge may indicate the method he or she wishes jurors to follow in answering questions.) Please do not hesitate to speak freely about anything you believe we should know.

(9) During jury selection you may be excused from serving on the jury in one of two ways. First, I may excuse you for cause; that is, I may decide that there is a valid reason why you cannot or should not serve in this case. Second, an attorney for one of the parties may excuse you without giving any reason for doing so. This is called a peremptory challenge. The law gives each party the right to excuse a certain number of jurors in this way. If you are excused, you should not feel bad or take it personally. As I explained before, there simply may be something that causes you to be excused from this particular case.

(10) You have been called here today as prospective jurors in the Family Division of the _____ County Circuit Court. This is a child protection proceeding. It is not a criminal case.

(11) I will now introduce the parties to this case, the attorneys, and the witnesses, and you will be asked if you know any of them. [Parties and attorneys briefly stand and face jury panel as they are introduced.]

The petitioner is _____. The People of the State of Michigan are represented by _____, an assistant prosecuting attorney for _____ County .

The mother/father/parents/guardian/nonparent adult

respondent/custodian is (are) _____ and _____) and he/she/they is (are) represented by attorney _____.

Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. _____, an attorney, has been appointed by the Court to represent the child(ren). [If both a lawyer-guardian ad litem and an attorney have been appointed for one or more of the children, give the following instead:

Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. _____, an attorney, has been appointed by the court to represent the best interests of the child(ren) and is called the lawyer-guardian ad litem for the child(ren). Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. _____, an attorney, has been appointed by the court to represent the wishes of (child's name).]

The witnesses who may testify in this case are: [read list of witnesses].

(12) We are here today on a petition filed by _____, a Children's Protective Services worker for the _____ County Family Independence Agency, alleging that the Court has jurisdiction over _____, who was (were) born on _____, and is (are) now _____ years of age, by reason of Chapter 12A of the Michigan Probate Code, which provides as follows: The Family Division of the Circuit Court shall have jurisdiction in proceedings concerning any child under 18 years of age found within the County: [read pertinent statutory allegations from MCL 712A.2(b)(1),(2),(3),(4) and/or (5)]. The allegations which the petitioner will attempt to prove are as follows: [read factual allegations in petition.]

(13) [The voir dire examination should next be conducted by the judge

and/or counsel. Preliminary oath to jury panel]: I will now ask you to stand and swear to truthfully and completely answer all the questions that you will be asked about your qualifications to serve as jurors in this case. If you have religious beliefs against taking an oath, you may affirm that you will answer all the questions truthfully and completely. Please raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear or affirm that you will truthfully and completely answer all questions about your qualifications to serve as jurors in this case?

(14) The bailiff/clerk will now draw the names of six (seven) prospective jurors. As your name is called, please come forward and take your seat in the jury box, starting in the back row with the seat closest to the back of the courtroom, and filling in across the back row and then the front row in the same manner.

VOIR DIRE QUESTIONS

The attorneys and I will now ask questions of the prospective jurors seated in the jury box. The rest of you should pay close attention to the questions and the answers, as one or more of the prospective jurors now in the jury box may be excused and your name may be drawn. Rather than repeat all the questions, I will merely ask you if you heard the questions and heard or saw the answers of the other prospective jurors and whether you would have answered any of the questions differently. You should then indicate which questions you would have answered differently, if any. If you cannot remember a question, please so indicate and I will be happy to repeat the question.

(1) Do any of you know any of the parties, attorneys or witnesses in this case? (If yes): How do you know them?

(2) Have any of you ever been convicted of a felony?

(3) Have any of you already made up your mind about the facts of this case or what the outcome should be?

(4) Have any of you or any of your relatives or any of your close friends ever been involved in a child protection proceeding such as this? If so, please explain.

(5) Will all of you be willing to follow my instructions to you concerning your role in this trial?

(6) Will all of you be willing to accept my explanation or definition of the law even if you do not personally agree with that explanation or definition?

(7) Do all of you agree that a child may be harmed emotionally as well as physically?

(8) Do any of you believe that the State should never intervene in a family to protect a child?

(9) Do any of you have any personal, religious, or philosophical beliefs that would interfere with your sitting as a juror and deciding this case?

(10) We expect this trial to last for ____ days. Would that cause any of you a real hardship?

(11) Some of you may have health problems or physical or mental characteristics that would make it difficult for you to serve on a jury without some accommodation being made by the court. We will be happy to make any reasonable accommodation that would permit you to serve as a fully participating juror.

Do any of you have a medical problem which makes it difficult for you to sit for up to two hours at a time?

Do any of you have a serious hearing, speech or vision impairment?

Do any of you have any other condition that would make it difficult for you to serve on a jury without some accommodation being made?

(12) Do any of you have any reason for feeling unable to serve on this jury or any reason why you could not be a fair and impartial juror?

(13) [Attorneys should now ask their questions.]

(14) [Attorneys exercise challenges for cause.]

(15) [Attorneys exercise peremptory challenges.]

(16) [Once six or seven jurors have been seated and all attorneys have exhausted their peremptory challenges or are satisfied with the jury, the judge thanks and excuses the remaining members of the jury panel who have not been selected.]

(17) [Caution jury not to discuss case among themselves or with anyone else and take a short recess.]

**INSTRUCTIONS AFTER VOIR DIRE
AND BEFORE PROOFS**

(1) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I will now ask you to stand and swear or affirm to perform your duty to try this case justly and to reach a true verdict. Please rise and raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that, in this case now before the court, you will justly decide the questions submitted to you and unless you are discharged by the Court from further deliberation, you will render a true verdict; that you will render your verdict only on the evidence introduced and in accordance with the instructions of the Court?

(2) Now I will explain some of the legal principles you will need to know and the procedure we will follow in this trial.

(3) First, the prosecutor will make an opening statement in which he/she will give his/her theory of the case. The other attorneys do not have to make opening statements, but if they choose to do so, they may make an opening statement after the prosecutor makes his/hers, or they may wait until later. These opening statements are not evidence. They are only meant to help you understand how each party sees the case.

Next, the prosecutor will present his/her evidence. The prosecutor may call witnesses to testify and may show you exhibits such as documents or physical objects. The other attorneys have the right to cross-examine, that is, to question, the prosecutor's witnesses.

After the prosecutor has presented all his/her evidence, the other attorneys may also offer evidence, but they do not have to. If they do call any witnesses, the prosecutor has the right to cross-examine them. The prosecutor may also call witnesses to contradict the testimony of the other parties' witnesses.

After all the evidence has been presented, the attorneys for each party will make their closing arguments. Like opening statements, they are not evidence. They are only meant to help you understand the evidence and the way each party sees the case. You must base your verdict only on the evidence.

(4) My responsibility as the judge in this trial is to make sure that the trial is run fairly and efficiently, to make decisions about evidence, and to instruct you about the law that applies to this case. You must take the law as I give it to you. Nothing I say is meant to reflect my own opinions about the facts of the case. As jurors, you are the ones who will decide this case.

(5) Your responsibility as jurors is to decide what the facts of the case are. That is your job and no one else's. You must think about all the evidence and then decide what each piece of evidence means and how important you think it is. This includes how much you believe what each of the witnesses said. What you decide about any fact in this case is final.

(6) When it is time for you to decide the case, you are only allowed to consider the evidence that was admitted in the case. Evidence includes only the sworn testimony of the witnesses, the exhibits, such as documents or other things which I admit into evidence, and anything else I tell you to consider as evidence.

(7) It is your job to decide what the facts of this case are. You must decide which witnesses you believe and how important you think their testimony is. You do not have to accept or reject everything a witness says. You are free to believe all, none, or part of any person's testimony.

In deciding which testimony you believe, you should rely on your own common sense and everyday experience. However, in deciding whether you believe a witness's testimony, you must set aside any bias or prejudice you have based on the race, gender, or national origin of the witness. [Include other improper considerations, such as religion or sexual orientation, where appropriate.]

There is no fixed set of rules for judging whether you believe a witness, but it may help you to think about these questions:

- (a) Was the witness able to see or hear clearly? How long was the witness watching or listening? Was anything else going on that might have distracted the witness?
- (b) Does the witness seem to have a good memory?
- (c) How does the witness look and act while testifying? Does the witness seem to be making an honest effort to tell the truth, or does the witness seem to evade the questions or argue with the attorneys?
- (d) Does the witness's age or maturity affect how you judge his or her testimony?
- (e) Does the witness have any bias or prejudice or any personal interest in how this case is decided?

- (f) Have there been any promises, threats, suggestions, or other influences that affect how the witness testifies?
- (g) In general, does the witness have any special reason to tell the truth, or any special reason to lie?
- (h) All in all, how reasonable does the witness's testimony seem when you think about all the other evidence in the case?

(8) The questions the attorneys ask the witnesses are not evidence. Only the answers are evidence. You should not think that something is true just because one of the attorneys asks questions that assume or suggest that it is true.

(9) I may ask some of the witnesses questions myself. These questions are not meant to reflect my opinion about the evidence. If I ask questions, my only reason would be to ask about things that may not have been fully explored.

(10) [Optional Instruction] During the trial you may think of an important question that would help you understand the facts in this case. You are allowed to ask such questions.

You should wait to ask questions until after a witness has finished testifying. If you still have an important question after all of the attorneys have finished asking their questions, don't ask it yourself. Instead, raise your hand, write the question down, and pass it to the bailiff. He/she will give it to me.

There are rules of evidence that a trial must follow. If your question is allowed under those rules, I will ask the witness your question. If your question is not allowed, I will either rephrase it or I will not ask it at all.

(11) During the trial the attorneys may object to certain questions or statements made by the other attorneys or witnesses. I will rule on these objections according to the law. My rulings are not meant to reflect my opinion about the facts of the case.

(12) Sometimes the attorneys and I will have discussions out of your hearing. Also, while you are in the jury room I may have to take care of other matters that have nothing to do with this case. Please pay no attention to these interruptions.

(13) You must not discuss the case with anyone, including your family or friends. You must not even discuss it with the other jurors until the time comes for you to decide the case. I will tell you when it is time for you to decide the case, and will send you to the jury room to begin your deliberations. You should then discuss the case among yourselves, but only in the jury room and only when all the jurors are there. When the trial is over, you may, if you wish, discuss the case with anyone.

(14) If I call for a recess during the trial, I will either send you back to the jury room or allow you to leave the building. During these recesses you must not discuss the case with anyone or let anyone discuss it with you or in your presence. If someone tries to do that, tell him or her to stop, and explain that as a juror you are not allowed to discuss the case. If he or she continues, leave them at once and report the incident to me as soon as you return to court.

You must not talk to the parties, attorneys, or the witnesses about anything at all, even if it has nothing to do with the case.

It is very important that you only get information about the case here in court, when you are acting as the jury and when the parties, the attorneys, and I are all here.

(15) [Give this instruction only if media coverage is expected.]

During the trial, do not read, listen to, or watch any news reports about the case. Under the law, the evidence you consider to decide the case must meet certain standards. For example, witnesses must swear to tell the truth, and the attorneys must be able to cross-examine them. Because news reports do not have to meet these standards, they could give you incorrect or misleading information that might unfairly favor one side. So, to be fair to both sides, you must follow this instruction.

[Give the instruction below when recessing:]

Remember, for the reasons I explained to you earlier, you must not read, listen to, or watch any news reports about this case while you are serving on this jury.

(16) Do not go to the scene of any of the incidents alleged in the petition. If it is necessary for you to view a scene, you will be taken there as a group under my supervision. Do not make any investigation of your own or conduct an experiment of any kind.

(17) You may take notes during the trial if you wish, but of course, you don't have to. If you do take notes, you should be careful that it does not distract you from paying attention to all the evidence. When you go to the jury room to decide on your verdict, you may use your notes to help you remember what happened in the courtroom. If you take notes, do not let anyone except the other jurors see them. You

must turn them over to the bailiff/clerk during recesses. If you do take notes, please write your name on the first page.

(Alternate 17) I don't believe that it is desirable or helpful for you to take notes during this trial. If you take notes, you might not be able to give your full attention to the evidence. Therefore, please do not take any notes while you are in the courtroom.

(18) If you cannot hear a question by an attorney, an answer by a witness, or anything I say, please raise your hand. When I recognize you, you should indicate what you did not hear. Do not hesitate to ask something be repeated, as it is very important that you hear everything that is said.

(19) From time to time throughout the trial I may address the attorneys as counsel, which is another word for attorney.

(20) [For multi-day trials] You can see that we have chosen a jury of seven. After you have heard all the evidence and my instructions, there will be a drawing by lot to decide which one of you will be excused in order to form a jury of six.

(21) I may give you more instructions during the trial, and at the end of the trial I will give you detailed instructions about the law in this case. You should consider all of my instructions as a connected series. Taken together, they are the law which you must follow.

(22) After all of the evidence has been presented and the attorneys have given their closing arguments, I will give you detailed instructions about the rules of law that apply to this case. You will then go to the jury room to decide on your verdict.

(23) It is important for you to keep an open mind and not make a decision about anything in the case until you go to the jury room to decide the case.

[At this point explain the daily schedule for the trial: When the trial will start in the morning, how long for lunch, when the trial will stop for the evening, etc.]

JURY INSTRUCTIONS

(revised May 1, 2003)

(1) Members of the jury, the evidence and arguments in this case are finished, and I will now instruct you on the law. That is, I will explain the law that applies to this case.

(2) Remember that you have taken an oath to return a true and just verdict, based only on the evidence and my instructions on the law. You must not let sympathy or prejudice influence your decision.

(3) It is my duty to instruct you on the law. You must take the law as I give it to you. If an attorney says something different about the law, follow what I say. At various times, I have already given you some instructions about the law. You must take all my instructions together as the law you are to follow. You should not pay attention to some instructions and ignore others.

(4) As jurors, you must decide what the facts of this case are. You must think about all the evidence and then decide what each piece of evidence means and how important you think it is. This includes whether you believe what each of the witnesses said.

(5) To sum up, it is your job to decide what the facts of the case are, to apply the law as I give it to you, and, in that way, to decide the case.

(6) When you discuss the case and decide on your verdict, you may only consider the evidence that has been properly admitted in this case. Therefore, it is important for you to understand what is evidence and what is not evidence.

(7) The evidence in this case includes only the sworn testimony of

witnesses (the exhibits which I admitted into evidence, and anything else I told you to consider as evidence).

(8) Many things are not evidence and you must be careful not to consider them as evidence. I will now describe some of the things that are not evidence.

(9) The fact that a petition was filed alleging that the Court has jurisdiction over (Child(ren)'s Name(s)), (and that (Child(ren)'s Name(s)) was (were) placed in foster care pending this hearing,) and that (Mother's, (Step)Father's, Guardian's, Nonparent Adult's or Custodian's Name(s)) is (are) present in court today is not evidence.

(10) The attorneys' statements and arguments are not evidence. They are only meant to help you understand the evidence and the theory of each party. The questions which the attorneys ask witnesses are also not evidence. You should consider these questions only as they give meaning to the witnesses' answers. You should only accept things the attorneys say that are supported by the evidence or by your own common sense and general knowledge.

(11) My comments, rulings, questions and instructions are also not evidence. It is my duty to see that the trial is conducted according to the law and to tell you the law that applies to this case. However, when I make a comment or give an instruction, I am not trying to influence your vote or express a personal opinion about the case. If you believe that I have an opinion about how you should decide this case, you must pay no attention to that opinion. You are the only judges of the facts and

you should decide this case from the evidence.

(12) [Give when appropriate] At times during the trial, I have excluded evidence that was offered or stricken testimony that was heard. Do not consider those things in deciding the case. Make your decision only on the evidence that I let in, and nothing else.

(13) [Give this instruction only if more than one party produced evidence.] Your decision should be based on all of the evidence regardless of which party produced it.

(14) You should use your own common sense and general knowledge in weighing and judging the evidence, but you should not use any personal knowledge you may have about a place, person or event. To repeat once more, you must decide this case based only on the evidence admitted during the trial.

(15) As I said before, it is your job to decide what the facts of this case are. You must decide which witnesses you believe and how important you think their testimony is. You do not have to accept or reject everything a witness said. You are free to believe all, none, or part of any person's testimony.

(16) In deciding which testimony you believe, you should rely on your own common sense and everyday experience. However, in deciding whether you believe a witness's testimony, you must set aside any bias or prejudice you may have based on the race, gender, or national origin of the witness. [Include other improper considerations, such as religion or sexual orientation, where appropriate.]

(17) There is no fixed set of rules for judging whether you believe a

witness, but it may help you to think about these questions:

- (a) Was the witness able to see or hear clearly? How long was the witness watching or listening? Was anything else going on that might have distracted the witness?
- (b) Did the witness seem to have a good memory?
- (c) How did the witness look and act while testifying? Did the witness seem to be making an honest effort to tell the truth, or did the witness seem to evade the questions or argue with the attorneys?
- (d) Does the witness's age or maturity affect how you judge his or her testimony?
- (e) Does the witness have any bias or prejudice or any personal interest in how this case is decided?
- (f) (Have there been any promises, threats, suggestions, or other influences that affected how the witness testified?)
[Give only on request where appropriate.]
- (g) In general, does the witness have any special reason to tell the truth, or any special reason to lie?
- (h) All in all, how reasonable does the witness's testimony seem when you think about all the other evidence in the case?

(18) Sometimes the testimony of different witnesses will not agree, and you must decide which testimony you accept. You should think about whether the

disagreement involves something important or not, and whether you think someone is lying or is simply mistaken. People see and hear things differently, and witnesses may testify honestly but simply be wrong about what they thought they saw or remembered. It is also a good idea to think about which testimony agrees best with the other evidence in the case.

(19) However, you may conclude that a witness deliberately lied about something that is important to how you decide the case. If so, you may choose not to accept anything that witness said. On the other hand, if you think the witness lied about some things but told the truth about others, you may simply accept the part you think is true and ignore the rest.

(20) [Give this instruction when circumstantial evidence has been admitted.] Facts can be proved by direct evidence from a witness or an exhibit. Direct evidence is evidence about what we actually see or hear. For example, if you look outside and see rain falling, that is direct evidence that it is raining.

Facts can also be proved by indirect, or circumstantial, evidence. Circumstantial evidence is evidence that normally or reasonably leads to other facts. So, for example, if you see a person come in from outside wearing a raincoat covered with small drops of water, that would be circumstantial evidence that it is raining.

You may consider circumstantial evidence. Circumstantial evidence by itself, or a combination of circumstantial evidence and direct evidence, can be used to prove a fact.

(21) The issue that you, the jury, will have to decide is whether one or

more of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition have been proven.* If you find that one or more of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition have been proven, then the Court will have jurisdiction over (Child(ren)'s Name(s)). I will now explain what those statutory grounds are. The Court has jurisdiction over a child [use only those applicable to the case]:

- a. if that child's parent or other person legally responsible for the care and maintenance of that child, when able to do so, neglects or refuses to provide proper or necessary support, education, medical, surgical, or other care necessary for his or her health or morals or
- b. if that child is subject to a substantial risk of harm to his or her mental well-being, or
- c. if that child is abandoned by his or her parents, guardian or other custodian, or
- d. if that child is without proper custody or guardianship, or
- e. if that child's home or environment, by reason of neglect, cruelty, drunkenness, criminality, or depravity on the part of a parent, guardian, nonparent adult or other custodian, is an unfit place for that child to live in, or
- f. if that child's parent has substantially failed, without good cause, to comply with a limited guardianship placement plan regarding the child, or

- g. if that child's parent has substantially failed, without good cause, to comply with a court-structured plan regarding the child, or
- h. if that child has a guardian appointed for him or her under the Michigan Estates and Protected Individuals Code and
 - (i) that child's parent, having the ability to support or assist in supporting the child, has failed or neglected, without good cause, to provide regular and substantial support for the child for a period of two years or more before the filing of the petition, or if a support order has been entered, has failed to substantially comply with the order for a period of two years or more before the filing of the petition, and
 - (ii) that child's parent, having the ability to visit, contact or communicate with the child, has regularly and substantially failed or neglected, without good cause, to do so for a period of two years or more before the filing of the petition.

[*Note: If only one statutory ground is alleged in the petition, substitute "the statutory ground" for "one or more of the statutory grounds" throughout these instructions.]

(22) The standard of proof in this case is proof by a preponderance of

the evidence. Proof by a preponderance of the evidence means that the evidence that a statutory ground alleged in the petition is true outweighs the evidence that that statutory ground is not true.

(23) [Give this instruction only if the respondent(s) present no evidence.]

(Mother's, (Step)Father's, Guardian's, Nonparent Adult's or Custodian's Name(s)) has (have) no duty to present evidence that the statutory grounds alleged in the petition are not true. It is your duty to decide from the evidence that you have heard whether one or more of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition are true.

(24) Neglect means the failure of a parent, guardian or custodian to do something or to provide something for a child that the parent, guardian, nonparent adult or custodian has a duty to do or to provide in order to protect the life or physical or emotional health of the child.

Neglect may be defined as the failure to exercise the care that circumstances justly demand. It may lie in the failure to do something which a reasonably prudent parent -- guided by those considerations which ordinarily regulate the conduct of human affairs -- would do; or it may lie in the doing of something which a reasonably prudent parent -- in view of the same considerations -- would not do. The law does not say what a reasonably prudent parent would or would not do under such circumstances. That is for you to decide. It is for you, the jury, to determine from the evidence in this case, what care was necessary for the child/children during the time stated in the petition and whether the parents failed to exercise the care that

circumstances justly demanded while the child/children was (were) under their care and custody.

[Editor's Note: While we have used the above neglect definition for many years, your Editor believes that it is too complicated and that it is very difficult to understand, especially when the jurors only hear it read to them and do not have the opportunity to read it themselves. Therefore, your Editor proposes a plain English version which may be more easily understood by jurors:

"Neglect means the failure of a parent, guardian, nonparent adult or custodian to provide the care that a child needs, including the failure to protect the physical and emotional health of a child. Neglect may be intentional or unintentional.

It is for you, the jury, to determine from the evidence in this case, what care was necessary for the child/children and whether or not his/her/their parent(s), guardian, nonparent adult or custodian provided that care".]

The legal definition of cruelty is the same as the common understanding of the word cruelty. It implies physical or emotional mistreatment of a child.

Depravity means a morally corrupt act or practice.

The legal definition of criminality is the same as the common

understanding of the word criminality. Criminality is present when a person violates the criminal laws of the State of Michigan or of the United States. Whether a violation of the criminal laws of the State of Michigan or of the United States by a parent, guardian, nonparent adult or custodian renders the home or environment of a child an unfit place for the child to live in is for you to decide based on all of the evidence in the case.

A child is without proper custody or guardianship when he or she is: 1) left with, or found in the custody of, a person other than a legal parent, legal guardian or other person authorized by law or court order to have custody of the child, and 2) the child was originally placed, or came to be, in the custody of a person not legally entitled to custody of the child for either an indefinite period of time, no matter how short, or for a definite, but unreasonably long, period of time. What is unreasonably long depends on all the circumstances. It is proper for a parent or guardian to place his or her child with another person who is legally responsible for the care and maintenance of the child and who is able to and does provide the child with proper care and maintenance. [Editor's Note: I believe that juries will not understand what the term "legally responsible" means if you read the preceding sentence to them. You may wish to consider adding something like the following: "A baby sitter, relative or other care-giver is not legally responsible for the care and maintenance of a child after the previously agreed-upon period of care has ended". This additional sentence is not contained in the statute, but expresses the intent of the committee that drafted the statutory language.]

"Education" means learning based on an organized educational program

that is appropriate, given the age, intelligence, ability, and any psychological limitations of a child, in the subject areas of reading, spelling, mathematics, science, history, civics, writing, and English grammar.

(25) [Give when appropriate] You have heard testimony about another child/other children of (Mother's/Father's Name(s)), namely, (Child(ren)'s Name(s)). That child/those children is (are) not the subject(s) of the petition(s) before you now.* How a parent treats one child is evidence of how that parent may treat another child. Therefore, if you choose to believe the evidence, presented by any party, relating to how (Mother's/Father's Name(s)) treated (that other child)(those other children), you may consider it in making your decision in relation to (this child)(any or all of these children). [*Note: Do not read this sentence if the "other child or children" are also subjects of the present petition.]

(26) If you find that one or more of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition have been proven, the fact that circumstances may have improved since (Date petition filed or another more appropriate date, where applicable) does not negate your finding.

(27) It is not necessary that each and every fact alleged in the petition be proven before you can find that one or more of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition have been proven. It is necessary, however, that sufficient facts be proven so that, in your judgment, you can find by a preponderance of the evidence that one or more of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition have been proven.

(28) [Give when applicable] You may, but are not required to, find

that the child's home or environment was an unfit place for the child to live in by reason of neglect or cruelty on the part of his or her parent, guardian, nonparent adult or custodian if you find all the following:

1. The child has suffered an injury or injuries.
2. The child was not capable of inflicting the injury or injuries on himself or herself.
3. The injury or injuries are such that would not ordinarily occur unless they were caused by another person inflicting them on the child (called "cruelty") or another person not providing proper care and supervision for the child in order to prevent the injury or injuries (called "neglect").
4. The child was in the exclusive control of his or her parent, guardian, nonparent adult or custodian at the time the injury or injuries occurred. (The term "custodian" includes any other person to whom the parent or guardian entrusted the care of the child if the parent or guardian knew, or should have known, that that person might injure the child or permit the child to be injured through lack of proper care and supervision.)
5. The true explanation of what happened to the child is more likely to be within the knowledge of the parent, guardian, nonparent adult or custodian than the petitioner.

(29) [Read only those paragraphs below which apply to the case]

- a. If you find by a preponderance of the evidence that (Child(ren)'s Name(s))'s, mother, or father, or both, when able to do so, neglected or refused to provide proper or necessary support, medical, surgical or other care necessary for his/her/their health or morals, or
- b. if you find by a preponderance of the evidence that (Child(ren)'s Name(s)) was (were) subject to a substantial risk of harm to his/her/their mental well-being, or
- c. if you find by a preponderance of the evidence that (Child(ren)'s Names)) was (were) abandoned by his/her/their mother/father/parents/guardian/custodian, or
- d. if you find by a preponderance of the evidence that (Child(ren)'s Name(s)) was (were) without proper custody or guardianship, or
- e. if you find by a preponderance of the evidence that the home or environment of (Child(ren)'s Name(s)) was an unfit place for him/her/them to live in by reason of neglect, cruelty, drunkenness, criminality or depravity on the part of his/her/their mother, or (step)father, or both, or guardian, nonparent adult or custodian, or
- f. if you find by a preponderance of the evidence that (Child(ren)'s Name(s))'s mother, or father, or both, has (have) substantially failed, without good cause, to comply with a limited guardianship placement plan regarding the child(ren), or

- g. if you find by a preponderance of the evidence that (Child(ren))'s Name(s))'s mother, or father, or both, has (have) substantially failed, without good cause, to comply with a court-structured plan regarding the child(ren), or
- h. if you find by a preponderance of the evidence that (Child(ren))'s Name(s)) has (have) a guardian appointed for him/her/them under the Michigan Estates and Protected Individuals Code, and
 - (i) that (Child(ren))'s Name(s))'s mother, or father, or both, having the ability to support or assist in supporting the child(ren), has (have) failed or neglected, without good cause, to provide regular and substantial support for the child(ren) for a period of two years or more before the filing of the petition, or if a support order has been entered, has (have) failed to substantially comply with the order for a period of two years or more before the filing of the petition, and
 - (ii) that (Child(ren))'s Name(s))'s mother, or father, or both, having the ability to visit, contact or communicate with the child(ren), has (have) regularly and substantially failed or neglected, without good cause, to do so for a period of two years or more

before the filing of the petition,
then you must find that one or more of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition
have been proven.

[Read only those paragraphs below which have the same letter caption as
the paragraphs you read from the first half of Instruction 29]

- a. If you do not find by a preponderance of the evidence that
(Child(ren)'s Name(s))'s mother, or father, or both, when able to
do so, neglected or refused to provide proper or necessary support,
medical, surgical or other care necessary for his/her/their health or
morals, and
- b. if you do not find by a preponderance of the evidence that
(Child(ren)'s Name(s)) (were) subject to a substantial risk of harm
to his/her/their mental well-being, and
- c. if you do not find by a preponderance of the evidence that
(Child(ren)'s Name(s)) was (were) abandoned by his/her/their
mother/father/parents/guardian/custodian, and
- d. if you do not find by a preponderance of the evidence that
(Child(ren)'s Name(s)) was (were) without proper custody or
guardianship, and
- e. if you do not find by a preponderance of the evidence that the
home or environment of (Child(ren)'s Name(s)) was an unfit place
for him/her/them to live in by reason of neglect, cruelty,

drunkenness, criminality or depravity on the part of his/her/their mother, or (step)father, or both, or guardian, nonparent adult or custodian, and

- f. if you do not find by a preponderance of the evidence that (Child(ren)'s Name(s))'s mother, or father, or both, has (have) substantially failed, without good cause, to comply with a limited guardianship placement plan regarding the child(ren), and
- g. if you do not find by a preponderance of the evidence that (Child(ren)'s Name(s))'s mother, or father, or both, has (have) substantially failed, without good cause, to comply with a court-structured plan regarding the child(ren), and
- h. if you do not find by a preponderance of the evidence that (Child(ren)'s Name(s)) has (have) a guardian appointed for him/her/them under the Michigan Estates and Protected Individuals Code, and
 - (i) that (Child(ren)'s Name(s))'s mother, or father, or both, having the ability to support or assist in supporting the child(ren), has (have) failed or neglected, without good cause, to provide regular and substantial support for the child(ren) for a period of two years or more before the filing of the petition, or if a support order has been entered, has (have) failed

to substantially comply with the order for a period of two years or more before the filing of the petition, and

- (ii) that (Child(ren)'s Name(s))'s mother, or father, or both, having the ability to visit, contact or communicate with the child(ren), has (have) regularly and substantially failed or neglected, without good cause, to do so for a period of two years or more before the filing of the petition,

then you must find that none of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition has been proven.

(30) You are not to concern yourselves with what will happen to (Child(ren)'s Name(s)) if you should find that one or more of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition have been proven. If the Court has jurisdiction of this child/these children, that does not necessarily mean that he/she/they will be removed from their home or made a ward/wards of the court either temporarily or permanently. If the Court has jurisdiction of this child/these children, the Court will then decide at a later time what to do about this child/these children and his/her/their family. There are many options available to the Court. The Court could order counseling or other programs for this child/these children and his/her/their family. The Court could return this child/these children to his/her/their mother/father/parents, or the Court could remove him/her/them either temporarily or permanently from his/her/their

mother/father/parents.

(31) I instruct you that this is a child protection proceeding. It is not a criminal case. Therefore, the issue before you is not that of guilt or innocence, but whether one or more of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition have been proven. You should not consider this proceeding to be in any way involved with the criminal law so far as your deliberations are concerned.

(32) When you go to the jury room, you should first choose a foreman (or foreperson). He or she should see to it that your discussions are carried on in a business- like way and that everyone has a fair chance to be heard.

(33) When at least five of you agree upon a verdict, it will be received as the jury's verdict. In the jury room you will discuss the case among yourselves, but ultimately each of you will have to make up your own mind. Any verdict must represent the individual, considered judgment of at least five of you.

(34) It is your duty as jurors to talk to each other and make every reasonable effort to reach agreement. Express your opinions and the reasons for them, but keep an open mind as you listen to your fellow jurors. Rethink your opinions and do not hesitate to change your mind if you decide you were wrong. Try your best to work out your differences.

(35) However, although you should try to reach agreement, none of you should give up your honest opinion about the case just because other jurors disagree with you or just for the sake of reaching a verdict. In the end, your vote must be your own, and you must vote honestly and in good conscience.

(36) If you want to communicate with me while you are deliberating, please have your foreman (foreperson) write a note and deliver it to the bailiff. It is not proper for you to talk directly with the judge, attorneys, court officers, or other people involved in the case.

(37) As you discuss the case, you must not let anyone, even me, know how your voting stands. Therefore, until you reach a verdict, do not reveal this to anyone outside the jury room.

(38) If you want to look at any or all of the exhibits that have been admitted into evidence, just ask for them.

(Alternate 38) You may take the exhibits which have been admitted into evidence into the jury room with you.

(39) There are only two possible verdicts in this case:

One or more of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition have been proven.

None of the statutory grounds alleged in the petition has been proven.

These possible verdicts are set forth in the verdict form(s) which you will receive. Only one of the possible verdicts may be returned by you (as to each child). When at least five of you have agreed upon one verdict (as to each child), your foreman (foreperson) should mark that verdict.

(40) [Attorneys approach the bench: any objections to the jury instructions? If so, jury leaves the courtroom for the judge to hear and rule on the objections, unless the objections are merely for the record, in which case the attorneys may agree to let

the jury begin deliberating and place their objections on the record after the jury is sent out to deliberate.]

(41) [Use when a jury of seven has been seated] Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: You will recall that at the beginning of the trial, I told you that while seven jurors were seated to hear this case, only six would deliberate and decide the case. Seven jurors were selected in the event one of you become ill or otherwise could not complete the case. Fortunately, all of you remained healthy, so we must now excuse one of you from further participation in this trial. If you are excused, you may either leave or may remain in the courtroom to see what the verdict will be. If you are excused, please don't feel your time has been wasted. You may have been needed and your participation was important to the administration of justice. The bailiff/clerk will now draw the name of one juror by lot. [Bailiff draws name]. Thank you Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms. _____. You may step down.

(42) [Administer oath to court bailiff]

Do you solemnly swear that you will, to the best of your ability, keep the persons sworn as jurors in this trial from separating from each other, that you will not permit any communication to be made to them, or to any of them, orally or otherwise, that you will not communicate with them, or with any of them, orally or otherwise, except upon the order of this Court, or to ask them if they have agreed upon a verdict, until they shall be discharged, and that you will not, before they render their verdict, communicate to any person the state of their deliberations or the verdict they have

agreed upon?

(43) [Give bailiff verdict form(s) and, if the jury will be taking them into the jury room at this time, the exhibits.]

(44) Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: Throughout this trial I have told you not to discuss the case among yourselves or with anyone else. Now is the time for you to discuss it among yourselves. Please follow the bailiff to the jury room to begin your deliberations.

RECEIVING THE VERDICT

(1) [Bailiff/clerk brings jury into courtroom after notifying judge that the jury has reached a verdict.]

(2) [Judge addresses jury] Who is your foreman (foreperson)?

(3) Has the jury reached a verdict?

(4) What is your verdict?

(5) [Speaking to the attorneys] Does anyone want the jury polled? [If yes] I will ask each of you in turn what your verdict is. Please indicate by saying either "one or more of the statutory grounds have been proven" or "none of the statutory grounds has been proven." [This should be asked with regard to each child.] [The judge then asks each juror in turn, naming them. If at least five of the jurors are not in agreement, send them back to deliberate further.]

(6) [Bailiff/clerk hands judge the verdict form(s) after taking it/them from the foreman (or foreperson)].

(7) Ladies and Gentlemen of the jury, I want to thank you very much for your patience and close attention during the trial. Your participation was important to the administration of justice. You are now excused. [or, instead of excusing the jury, say: Please return to the jury room for a few minutes so that I can speak with you and answer any questions you may have. You may follow the bailiff/clerk.]

(8) [If the jury finds the Court does not have jurisdiction] Case dismissed.

VERDICT FORM

[one statutory ground alleged]

We, the jury, find that:

- ☐ **The statutory ground alleged in the petition concerning (child's name) has been proven.**
- ☐ **The statutory ground alleged in the petition concerning (child's name) has not been proven.**

